

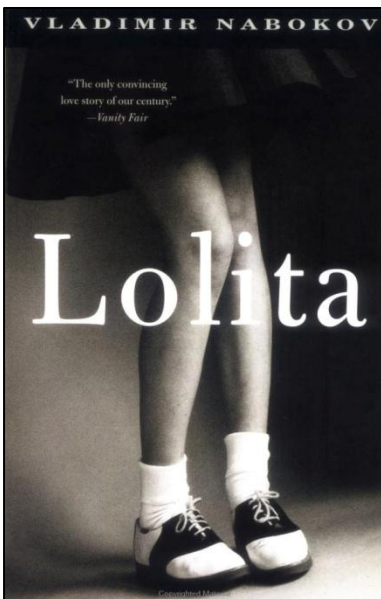
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# “Lolita”

Controversial novel poetically delves into the  
mind of a monster



By Macario Mora



I was raised differently than many of my privileged friends. When I was grounded for partaking in mischievous childhood adventures, I wasn't denied certain paltry rights like TV or video games; I was denied my freedom. Instead of a slap on the wrist for punching a cat or terrorizing my little brother, I was sent to my room for weeks - sometimes months - and allowed only to read or do homework. So, naturally, I became fascinated with literature.

It was during one of these long hiatuses from reality that I discovered Russian literature, and the genius of Vladimir Nabokov.

Born in 1899 in St. Petersburg, Russia, Nabokov is most famous for “Lolita,” which is about Professor Humbert Humbert who, after coming from Paris to New York in the early part of the last century, becomes involved with Charlotte Haze. She takes him in after his room burns down in a small New England town. It is in the Haze home that he meets and becomes fascinated with Haze's pre-teen daughter Dolores — Lolita.

The novel was Nabokov's instant claim to fame in America and was quickly considered a literary masterpiece. “Lolita” also became one of the most controversial pieces of 20th Century literature. Due to the nature of the novel, Lolita has become a noun described in several dictionaries as a seductive adolescent girl or a sexually precocious young girl.

“Lolita's” context may overwhelm a few readers with its detail of pedophilia as Nabokov takes the reader more closely inside the psyche of a monster than most of us would ever feel comfortable. But, that's really what makes this, in my opinion, one the best of many great novels from the last century.

Nabokov's ability to reach inside your mind and paint perfectly the protagonist's fiendish impulses and nightmarish desires on a mental canvas is on par with Vincent van Gogh's “Starry Night” or Chopin's Nocturne. It's an intellectual stimulus that's too beautiful, despite its superficial content, to not cherish.

His description of Humbert Humbert and Lolita's cross-country journeys and malevolent escapades is breathtaking. Nabokov and the novel are so much more than a Sunday read. Literary geeks are seldom privy to such mastery of their craft. It's truly a once in generation experience.

“Lolita” was the author's creative peak and perhaps sole masterpiece. But, the hundreds of his other novels, novellas, poems, short stories, dramas and works of nonfiction are more than worth a gander.

At the time of Nabokov's death in 1977, he had few peers on par intellectually or creatively. Truly, it's a shame this master of literature isn't on a pedestal dwarfing the likes of Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway or John Steinbeck.